DRIFTWOOD

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

One of the Series of Evening Public Ledger Original Short Stories on Married Life by the Best American Fiction Writers

IT 18 6:15 o'clock. In the kitchen "Yes, of course, it's waiting. Just he rose, "Why, Medaine-! I don't meal which was a bit more extravagant a bit and I'll be with you. Only a than was castomary in the household moment-" of Mr. and Mrs. John Carrington. The He hurried up the stairs, while again silver candlesticks were on the dining- the gaze of Medaine Carrington sought peated, and this time the voice bore a room table instead of the usual glass the flames, the gaze of one whose mind certain note of harshness. "We're ones; the service had been polished is peopled with anguish. But in a mo- through!" with extra care that morning. At the ment more it had vanished. John was side of each of the two plates was a beside her, bowing in mock over-politesprig of orange blossoms, which had ness, and offering his arm in an extrav. "I know what I'm doing, I'm perarrived, special delivery, from Cali- agant invitation to the table.

violet colorings, the off-givings of drift- it?" wood, sending their colorations into the "Marvelous." Her self-possession flames. Mrs. John Carrington was a quarrel." waiting for her husband to come home. John laughed. -to the dinner in honor of their tenth "And our idea may spread. Bentley's

failed, just as he never failed to tele- very simple, isn't it?"

the last touches had been given a a moment, sweetheart, until I tidy up --- !"

fornia, that morning. Just beyond the "Many congratulations today." he up with you as long as I can stand French doors leading to the living room said as they seated themselves. "Four it, and now I'm going away. You've was a large basket of roses. It was or five of the boys dropped in to tell me, become unbearable to me, and when a their troubles, and incidentally to say thing like that happens the best thing In the fireplace of the living room, how much they envied us. Strange to do is to get away. So I'm going." the flames leaped in blue and green and what a few little numbers will do, isn't

big, comfortable shadowy room, and had returned; with him before her she cut deep. There was the slightest upon the woman who sat, just within was again the usual Medaine Carringthe range of warmth, gazing into the lot. "This is the tenth year without, turned away, and for a long moment

married, you know-just last week. Not that there was any doubt as to Came into the office today, Told him utation; they were known as the hap- happiness, Bent, I said, 'is to learn to can't be remedied, you knowplest married couple of all their set- count to a hundred.' Then, I went m set, incidentally, which included on and told how it had worked with us. In five minutes. Mrs. Carrington knew, the habit of counting to a hundred bethere would sound the throbbing of a fere we said an unkind word; how, if familiar engine from down the street one of us was nervous or irritable, it and the squeaking of brakebands which became the duty of the other to hold in. always announced the homecoming of and the wenderful results that we've always announced the nomessand of the homessand of the best husband in town. John never attained. After all, dearest, it's all ing. John. At least, not with you.

phone her precisely at 11 o'clock each "Extremely so." For just an inmorning, just as he never failed to stant her eyes clouded-only to beighter. remember her birthday, or to send the again. "Two never seen prettier roses

biggest bashet of reses which he could than the ones you sent today, John." Mord, on their anniversary. Just as "That's what you're always good Medaine?" be never failed to take her to the thes enough to say. By the way, this roast Afre on Tuesday night, to the Country is done to a turn. I never tasted bet-

Club for the Friday fight damees, or—
but the list is too long. John was the
bieal husband. He never failed in any
thing.

They were before the driftwood thame.

with presentiment, gazing into the big fireplace where the driftwood crackled and the flames leaped and sourced in SHE rose then and moved clowly into wagrant colorings. The minutes passed

A CAR stopped protestingly. A step sounded. The deer opened. She turned with her usual state.

"How are you, dengest?"

"Same as itsual, succellent. It was hanging up his har and obscart. It was hanging up his har and obscart. A moment more and he came behind her, to lay his hands on her should be the first cate at event friends, and was hanging to her the part of the proof of someting to heart his trend of someting to heart him to lay his hands on her should be the first cate at event.

There was something in her the form an instant. How is more saves to be found that to lead in quickly.

for an instant. "How's my super which ented him to hook up quickly heart tonicht?"

"Happy as always, John." She had therein a secretarion. The discerning burned and kissed him lightly. "You of the herebuse enught her features, to

Courtney Ryley Cooper, outhor, lecturer, virous and and expert on fungle animals, began life as a closen in a reall virgus. Mr. Cooper says that he ran away from home for the test time to join the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show at the upe of five, and that after that, regularly two or three times a year, the rest of the Cooper family spent most of its time drayging him home schenever a crosse came to his town, Kansas City. After about five wears of this he began to misthe circus business with that of the newspaper and left the " white topa" to become a reporter for the Kansax City Star. He then ay cessively was a special writer for many newspapers. Later still he became general manager of a large circus. Following this he turned his attention to telling the rest of the world what he had learned of the land of the sawdust ring.

You never forget, John."
He straightened proudly.

He straightened proudly.
"Why should I? Pretty fire."
"Yes—driftwood. I've been sitting bere watching it, while I waited for thing to tell you."
"Why, dearest?" You seem so—"."

larly drawn and indicative of suffering. He half rose, but she motioned him

"I didn't think you'd understand." "Not coming back? Why---" "Not coming back, John," she re-

"Medaine!"

"Please!" She motioned him back. feetly clear and sane. I've simply put

CHE said it with more coolness than Dever, and with an incisiveness that twitching of John's fingers-then he was silent At last, as though eased in mind, he moved again to his chair.

"You're tired, sweetheart. Tired out -nervous. Don't worry. Everything'll be all right. If you'll just tell me the time or manner of his arrival. Mr. all about our system, and how it's what's wrong, we'll find a way to remand Mrs. John Carrington had a rep- worked out. 'All that you need for edy it. Nothing in the world that "Except this. I'm tired of you. John. Sick of you."

"Sick? Tired? He again faced her. "Sick of-" Then for a long time he was stlent again. "There, sweetheart, don't mind me. Of course you're tired. Ill too, We'll talk it over in the morning--

"There isn't going to be any morn-She laughed. "Ten years is enough, I want some one else now." "You!" He was on his feet in an

"Exactly what I said." "A man?"

"You don't suppose it wenter by any

beal husband. He never failed in any thing.

Nor did she. For Medaine Carring ton also had her place in the matrix montal sun. Even her enemies admitted that she was a perfect wife. The second that he defined the fire, it seemed that captured if the fire, it seemed that an expression, always the tapping of a shee drain the soft true gave evidence of terrousness, the quick knitting of her hands emphasized it. Now and then she turned her head toward the window—as though fearful of his coming, yet anxious that her former position, her eves fraught with presentiment, graing fine the long description of the property of matrix it is been accomplished. Then the former position, her eves fraught with presentiment, graing fine the long description of matrix of matrix it is been accomplished. Then the matrix is been accomplished. Then the matrix is been accomplished. The property with year, the property of the carrington watched in the second that you couldn't have the many the did your temper?

Not did she. For Medaine Carrington the behavior that he had her black that the matrix of the property of the cold like surface and in the second that the property in the surface of the property of the cold in the second that the property of the carrington watched if the without a quarrel, isn't it.

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Ye in a way. Then again, so have the did he meany that you very supplied me with all the meany that you very supplied me with all the meany that any one in by circumst

Morely frankness and fairness to let you

Whose who is start to be first of the drift was it is a specific at the point with the point was all the well to first the beard by the first the point was all the well to first the beard of the drift was all the well to first the beard of the drift was all the well to first the point was all the well the point was all the well the point was all the well the point was all the well the point was all the point was a

because symme must his chair to gritted. 'Don't worry for an about that end of it! I'll fine of "And then?' A peculiar girling eyes. 'When

Once more they were before the driftwood flame. She took his hand in hers sistless. But you're not, are you, I didn't know any other way in the a moment, then dropped limply. But "That was our bargain." He said it world to make you quarrel with me, to be did not resist her now, as he had somewhat grudgingly. "Please-!" He strove to break forget that eternal counting to a hun- done a moment before, "Tell me. "Just the trouble-just what hurt shine of ineffable happiness and the cul brow working convulsively. "You from her, but she held him tight, and dred before you'd ever answer, to— John—is this the first time you've ever me, that you'd stay by a silly thing the start to be the start to b a sudden plending happiness in her to-John, please-won't you kiss me? thought me spineless?" I don't love any one in the world but "I don't have to go away now, John. You. I swear it—nobody in the world. My other man' has come to me. Don't you see? I—I—" Then you understand, dearest—don't you the tears came—"I just couldn't stand understand? My other man has come it any—any more."

HE SHOOK his head, saying silently unarried, have you really been happy? "Right where they've always been," by what he would not say in words. "I?" He paused. His lips pressed to please her. She kissed tight for an instant. Then: "If you want the frank truth—I haven't." forobe, if you'll take the time to look "Stand it-stand what?"

inderstand? My other man has come it any—any more.'
to me—the other man that I wanted.''
'Hub?'' It was the only word he
"Why—why, eve "Hult" It was the only word he "Why-why, everything, John, You how on earth you wondered often again a pause. Then:
"Oh, never mind,"

like that. John," she looked at him ments. quickly, "during the time we've been a glint of merriment in her eyes: Why?"

could utter, as he stood there staring it terr, his arms flat at his sides, his arms flat at his sides, his claim and pepper. It isn't natural, IU—
It isn't natural, IV—
It isn

at night, and what you'd talk at at the dinner table. I knew to a what you'd do and say and how you' act. And John-a woman may say a wants that, but she doesn't. She want a husband who'll be good to her mor of the time, but who now and thenwell, who won't. We can't be super human, John. It isn't in us. You's been on time to dinner for ten rem I haven't even had the excitement of scolding you for being late. I-" then as if with an inspiration, she looked as at him-"John, did you ever notice how an electrical storm clears the air! And how sultry it has been beforehand? We've never even had the chance to know how beautiful thing can be after the clouds have rong We've had nothing but sunshine und it's blinded us and we haven't bea able to see anything."

phone me, the minute you'd get a

THEN she halted—suddenly beaming. A light of understanding had come into the eyes of John Carrington. The tired expression faded, to give way to one which Medaine had not seen in years. Slowly his arms raised and clasped about the form of his wife, He kissed her slowly, as one who tasts long at a sweet he is loath to leave. Ten years seemed to have rolled away, ten drab, uneventful years, which

plains. A soft hand touched his tenple and lingered there. "We're just been driftwood, John." He nodded and kissed her again. Then, like a streak, he turned from her and bounded up the stairs. Won-dering, she heard him fumbling about in an upper room, banging at drawers and uttering strange things under his breath. A grunt. Another. Louder,

now bore no more importance in re-

rospect than the flatness of monotone

Then:
"Medaine," came in bellowing tone,
yet ones which seemed strangely fraught with happiness, "where in thunder an

In the room below Medaine smiled.

In the room below Medaine smiled

—the smile of a woman who has fought
and won. She knew instinctively that
it was not the shirts which John wanted—that he merely was yielding to a thing he had put behind him for year, hurrying to that which he had longer to do for time interminable-yet a thin denied him through the represent of denied him through the represent of 'system' which now, happily, was system no longer. For they were on different basis, a truer basis-that o plain, honest naturalness, where re love could thrive in both the sun and called upward, snappily, yet with

for obe, if you'll take the time to look for them."

Five minutes later a caller steppe on the veranda of the Carrington bome

Can evil identity be lost

in good? See how this

throbbing story of mystery,

regeneration and love solves

THE BREAKING POINT

Copyright, 1922, by George H. Doran Co.

pull down all loved ones

When does human nature

crash under the strain of

fear and tragedy? Must it

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bere watching it, while I waited for you."

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Enablith, with whom he is smitten.

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The next day he got a job as a taxically select coothy whom he is smitten.

a great secret. He used no names, and he said nothing any crime. "The point is this." he finished. "h it better to believe the man is deal or to know that he is alive, but has 'There's no mistake about the recet-

been in Chiengo, that she had seen Dick there and talked to him. She turned the matter over in her mind shrowalls and the control of the control

house, or in one like it, while all the

"I'll te'l you if you wen't say where

